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The book should be read by every thoughtful person; by the theologian, for he needs the facts and the less positive spirit which the facts must bring concerning the unessentials of his system; by the scientist, for he will appreciate better that churchmen have always been found among the prophets and apostles of science; by the churchman, for he can see the luster of true religion ever growing brighter as knowledge has advanced.

JOHN MERLE COULTER.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. By GEORGE PARK FISHER, D.D., Professor in the Yale Divinity School. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1896. Pp. xv + 583. \$3.

DR. FISHER is exceptionally well prepared to write a history of doctrines. He possesses by nature the historic temperament; his mind is not affected by prejudice; and he is able to see both sides of a question and to accord due praise to the representatives of both. To this natural endowment he has added great acquisitions of learning. Moreover, he writes in a style at once simple, graceful, clear, and capable of expressing the nicest differences of meaning.

All these qualifications are evident in the book before us. It is singularly free from sectarian passion and bias. It makes no display of learning, while yet every page gives proof of wide research and careful thought. The language is full of those delicate shadings which are required by the subtle distinctions of philosophy and theology. The literary charm which made Dr. Fisher's *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief* acceptable to the unprofessional readers of a popular magazine pervades this work also.

The author has kept in mind the difference between Christian dogma and Christian doctrine. A history of dogma would consider only the official creeds of the various denominations, and would begin with the Council of Nice and end with the seventeenth century, when the great creeds were finished. It would not consider the movements of Christian thought during the past two centuries, a period in which Christianity has assumed a less dogmatic attitude, and several denominations have risen to power with but simple statements of belief, or with none at all, while several others have largely forgotten the dogmatic definitions for which they once contended. Dr. Fisher has happily

chosen the wider field of Christian thought on doctrinal subjects, including the formal creeds of Christendom, but also including much more. He devotes over a third of his book to theological thought since the era of creeds. His readers will appreciate specially his sketch of the present tendencies of theology. He rightly includes in his history the principal systems of heresy, since these have stimulated Christians to think soundly and have thus led to the discovery and the general acceptance of many truths, and have thus become a part of the history.

There are two forms in which the history of doctrines may be written. One is the chronological, in which the whole history is divided into periods, and the doctrines of each period are considered together. The other is the topical form, in which each doctrine is treated by itself and traced from its beginning to the end of its development. Dr. Fisher writes in the first form. But there is great need of a history of doctrines in the second, and I hope that he will soon supply this want in another volume. He has made it easy for us to survey the Christian thought of any particular period. Let him now make it easy for us to learn the history of any particular doctrine.

The judicious character of Dr. Fisher's thought is apparent in many passages in which he corrects popular impressions of history. He begins his book by rejecting the term "apostolic fathers" as inaccurate. He esteems highly the ability and piety of Wesel, Wessel, Wyclif, Hus, and Savonarola, who are known as the "reformers before the Reformation;" but he regards them, after all, as essentially Roman Catholic, and as differing fundamentally in doctrine from the later protestant leaders. Luther he represents as a conservative and cautious theologian. In a large section of the Anabaptists he sees excellent and able men, as far removed as possible from fanaticism and crime. He does not look upon the Unitarian movement in Massachusetts as a revolt from excessive Calvinism, for it was influential chiefly in the eastern part of the state, where Arminianism had been disseminated and had prepared the way for it, while it was little felt in the more Calvinistic west. It was a protest against the Puritanic neglect of fine literature, rather than against Calvinism, and began with admiration of such writers as Sir Charles Grandison and Miss Hannah More, and advanced to the admiration of Shakespeare and Goethe.

Dr. Fisher declines to say at what time the Anabaptists of England began to practice immersion, but waits for further discussion to cast light on the question. He keeps himself free from all such pre-

conceived theories as have forced some writers on the history of doctrines to misinterpret their materials, as the Roman Catholic seeks in the New Testament a germ of every dogma which he holds, and as the school of Baur bent the whole structure of Christian thought from its very beginning to the shape of the Hegelian philosophy.

But while Dr. Fisher is judicious and judicial, he is not cold. His pages glow with reverence for Christianity, and with sympathy with those who have sought to body forth its great truths in human language. Many parts of his work are biographical, and abound in the analysis of character and motive. His sketch of Channing is a good example of this feature. He appreciates highly many of those from whom, if he were stating his own views, he would differ; and he does not admire overmuch those who have gained the victory in the various doctrinal controversies of the past. Thus he gives us no mere catalogue of parties, of dogmas, or of states of opinion at particular epochs, but warm and living and well-balanced portraitures, and his work, though it is free from passion and from all excess of statement, does not lack the color and vitality which belong properly to all historical writing.

An excellent feature of the work is its brevity. One might suppose that an adequate history of Christian thought from its beginning could not be compressed into a single volume of moderate size; but Dr. Fisher has accomplished this difficult task. He has not sacrificed clearness in order to do this, nor has he given us partial views of the great systems of theology. His history is in a good degree round and complete. He has gained this success by seizing on the strong central features of the chief systems of Christian thought, while omitting many non-essential details; by quoting from others only their pivotal expressions, often only a few sentences, and often, again, only single phrases; and by restricting his footnotes to a few most necessary matters. Thus he has given us a full survey of the subject in a book which one can hold in his hand and read without the necessity of wading through useless verbiage.

I think that more might be done to ascertain the thought of the intelligent laity, as distinguished from that of the few great theologians. An example of this work is given in the closing chapter, where "certain theological tendencies of recent times" are considered. These are chiefly tendencies of the church as a whole, and not of theologians as a class. Could not a similar study be made of popular theology in the Middle Ages and the period immediately following the Reformation?

For the Middle Ages the Latin hymns would be an authority. The Anabaptist hymns used in Münster are remarkably orthodox and sober and remarkably free from the horrible teachings of Knipperdolling and John of Leyden. Would the Roman Catholic hymns of the Middle Ages show a similar freedom from many of the doctrinal errors adopted by the schoolmen? Moreover, would not a careful study of the Roman Catholic writers of our own times, in so far as they are not theologians, show a wide departure from some of the dogmas of the Council of Trent?

Dr. Fisher overlooks some writers who have contributed much to the formation of Christian thought. I may mention Andrew Fuller as an example, who once influenced powerfully the beliefs of both England and America, and who is still studied with attention by theologians. Swedenborg is noticed, but no account is taken of the undoubted effect produced on modern theological thought by certain parts of his speculations. The index is not complete and one consults it in vain for a number of names which are found in the text.

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THE contention of *Fichte und Erigena; Darstellung und Kritik, zweier verwandten Typen eines idealistischen Pantheismus*, von Dr. Theodor Wotschke (Halle a. S., Verlag von J. Krause; 1896, pp. 72; M. 1.50), is that man looks beyond empirical reality to a transcendent which is the principle of all finite existence and at the same time a fixed anchorage for the human heart in the storm and stress of life. This outlook and outreach is the metaphysical artery of the human organism and the source of religion and speculation, whose character in the individual is determined according as the intellect or the heart is the impelling factor and the preponderating coefficient of the exaltation into the eternal world. In spite of individual differences, the results of speculation show kindredness. Thus it is intelligible that at times we find a singular agreement between philosophers who are separated by a millennium, and who form their view of God and the world independent of each other. Fichte and Erigena show such similarity. The latter setting out from Greek Neoplatonism, the former from German idealism, arrive at the same monistic view of the world, which derives reality from one principle and considers the great manifoldness of existence, the intelligible world, and sensible objects, as expression and manifestation of an Absolute Existence. Both philos-